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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6625
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 5728
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 3627
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4216
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 0448
RHMFSS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Iran, Lebanon, Iraq,
Palestinian Territories (1/19)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported that Iranian President
Ahmedinejad will arrive in Damascus today for a two-day state
visit to Syria and will meet President Asad and senior Syrian

officials. All papers featured a statement by President
Ahmedinejad on Wednesday describing relations between Iran and
Syria as brotherly and strong, and saying that both countries
have clear positions regarding regional issues and against
foreign intervention in Middle East affairs.

Syrian papers also cited a speech by Dr. Mohammed al-Ghofari,
Syrian Minister of Justice, at the opening of the General
Conference of the Arab Bar Federation in Damascus, in which he
said that Syria is still cooperating with the IIC investigation
into the killing of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri and is keen
to reach the full truth about the crime. Headlines also featured
a statement by Ibrahim Simlali, Secretary General of the Arab Bar
Federation, expressing solidarity with Syria against pressure and
threats that "contradict the international charter."

All papers reported a statement by Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah,
Secretary General of Hezbollah, stressing that Lebanese national

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interests necessitate ending any possible hostility between the
Syrian and Lebanese governments and peoples. Nasrallah pointed
out that the latest severe wave of political, media and
psychological instigation against the Syrian government and
people have a racial nature. He dismissed the possibility of a
new civil war in Lebanon.

End summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"President Ahmadinejad commences today a state visit to Syria:
Tehran and Damascus reject foreign intervention in regional
affairs" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/19)

"Nasrallah: Jumblatt's project is to fragment the region.... We
refuse to demarcate the Syrian-Lebanese border under occupation.
Qansuh [Regional Secretary of the Syrian Social National Party]:
Masks have fallen.... The truth is approaching" (Government-owned
Al-Ba'th, 1/19)

"Russia reiterates the importance of a professional IIC
investigation. Lebanese Daily Al-Diyar: The new witness scandal
causes the collapse of Mehlis' credibility" (Government-owned

Tishreen, 1/19)

"Two Israeli soldiers injured during an arrest campaign in Jenin. Abbas calls for resumption of negotiations. Fateh and Hamas will be committed to protecting elections" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 1/19)

"A new military operation in Al-Anbar. US marine killed in Baghdad. Fallujah is sealed off for three days. A State Department memorandum refutes Bush's allegation that the Iraqi regime obtained uranium from Niger" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/19)

"Washington rejects negotiations with Iran. The Troika prepares to refer Iran's nuclear file to the UN Security Council. Iran: We are ready for partnership; threats are useless" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 1/19)

"Human Rights Watch denounces hypocritical rhetoric and the arrest of thousands of suspects without trial: US violations of human rights are flagrant" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 1/19)

¶3. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Most Eloquent Answer"

Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (1/19): "Thousands of Lebanese students demonstrated outside the US Embassy in Beirut on 17 January to protest American interference in Lebanese affairs.... This interference has taken the form of egregious positions and statements, as recently expressed by Ambassador Feltman and US Assistant State Secretary David Welch....

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"The demonstration will perhaps bring Americans back to their senses.... The Lebanese reject American and foreign

Syrian papers also cited a speech by Dr. Mohammed al-Ghofari, Syrian Minister of Justice, at the opening of the General Conference of the Arab Bar Federation in Damascus, in which he said that Syria is still cooperating with the IIC investigation into the killing of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri and is keen to reach the full truth about the crime. Headlines also featured a statement by Ibrahim Simlali, Secretary General of the Arab Bar Federation, expressing solidarity with Syria against pressure and threats that "contradict the international charter." All papers reported a statement by Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hizbollah, stressing that Lebanese national

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interests necessitate ending any possible hostility between the Syrian and Lebanese governments and peoples. Nasrallah pointed out that the latest severe wave of political, media and psychological instigation against the Syrian government and people have a racial nature. He dismissed the possibility of a new civil war in Lebanon.
End summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

custodianship.... The demonstration represents an eloquent response to those who accused the national resistance of treason....

"The demonstrations by youth in Beirut and Tripoli were the most prominent national topic, showing the truth of the patriotic and pan-Arab sentiments against the attempts to separate Lebanon from its Arab environment and turn it into a base for conspiracies against Syria and the region, and a station for the suspicious American-Zionist plans that seek to impose hegemony and serve

Israel's interests...."

"The Okar Voice and the Mokhtara Echo"

Khalid al-Ashhab, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawrah, commented (1/19): "Jeffrey Feltman, US ambassador in Beirut, stated that 'it is time now for the Lebanese government to get rid of Hezbollah if it seeks Washington's full support....'

"This American position is being translated into action by Walid Jumblatt and others, who started the campaign against Hezbollah by describing Hezbollah's weapons as treacherous and accusing the party of loyalty to foreign countries...."

"The Lebanese must be alert and must understand well what is being hatched against them and what maintains their power and strength, primarily their national unity and their resistance...."

"Lebanese Consciousness Will Reveal Traitors"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, said (1/18): "The rancorous orchestra in Lebanon has stooped to unprecedented levels in its abusive language against Syria and attacks on the Lebanese resistance.... But this campaign fully exposed this group before the Lebanese people and the Arab nation...."

"This group, upon instructions from foreigners, has renounced every honorable thing in Lebanon and everything related to Arabism, so much so that it is rejecting Arab initiatives to bring accord back to Lebanon and preserve the country's national unity...."

"The Lebanese people, who foiled the May 1982 agreement, will not allow revival of the agreements of humiliation and surrender and will drive off the specter of sedition and civil war, which the enemies of Lebanon and Arabism are preparing...."

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